

Richard Stallman, “Four Freedoms”

Read the article at <https://edtechbooks.org/-RUJE>

Background

Franklin D. Roosevelt’s inspiring speech on the four freedoms provided Richard Stallman’s with a framework for declaring, in a hopefully inspirational manner, Four Freedoms in regard to software. Stallman, an MIT graduate concerned about the growing trend toward proprietary software started the Free Software movement which is now supported by the Free Software Foundation.

Key Points

A program is “free software” if the program’s users have the four essential freedoms:

1. The freedom to run the program as you wish, for any purpose.
2. The freedom to study how the program works, and change it so it does your computing as you wish. Access to the source code is a precondition for this.
3. The freedom to redistribute copies so you can help your neighbor.
4. The freedom to distribute copies of your modified versions to others. By doing this you can give the whole community a chance to benefit from your changes. Access to the source code is a precondition for this.

If software is licensed in a way that does not provide these 4 freedoms, then it is categorized as nonfree or proprietary.

Discussion Questions

1. What impact do Stallman’s Four Freedoms have on open?
2. How is free different from open?

Additional Resources

Free Software Foundation. (2013). What is Free Software. Retrieved from <https://edtechbooks.org/-awLr>



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